

**SEAVINGTON ST MARY / MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT THE SEAVINGTON MILLENNIUM HALL
ON TUESDAY 19th MARCH 2019**

ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

Present Mr N Loxton [Chair], Mrs E Edwards (vice-Chair), Mrs J Ash, Mr A Doble, Mr N England, Mrs P Parsons, Mr C Reyland,
Mr A Dance (County/District Councillor) Mr Crispin Raikes (District Councillor)

Apologies Mr & Mrs D Froome, Mr B Edwards, Mrs T Gibson, Mrs J Lewis

Also Present 15 members of the public [3 arrived late in connection with the ordinary monthly meeting]

ANY QUESTION TIME – No questions had been submitted to the Parish Council and none were raised at the meeting

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 20th MARCH 2018 were agreed as correct and signed.

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Chairman – Nick Loxton welcomed all present and introduced Parish, County and District Councillors.

4.Chairman's Remarks

Planning

Last year I reported upon one pending application for Planning and Listing consent within our community, namely Court Farm's request to reinstate a 25-year lapsed consent for conversion of a barn to a residential dwelling. Post last year's annual meeting this was eventually approved.

This year has seen a number of applications, the successful request for a refurbishment of Ash Brothers business premises, the controversial applications at the northern end of Upton Lane and although technically outside our parishes, The Ilminster Carnival Club's application in Longforward Lane, both as yet without a decision. There has been a retrospective application for the erection of sheds in the garden of Southernaways in St Mary that has been turned down and we await an answer from SSDC concerning an enforcement notice for their removal, and as you will have seen in this March's edition in the Seavingtons' News, the Parish Council is being presented this evening, after this Village meeting, with both a planning proposal from The Ferne Animal Sanctuary for 13 houses to be built on land to the east of Seavington House, and also a development proposal from a resident. For those members of the public that wish to hear them, these presentations are the first ones on the Agenda of the Parish Council Meeting held here tonight immediately after this one.

Highways

At long last, it has been recognised and acknowledged that the "Old A303" also known as New Road is the **C5021**. This however still does not seem to stop Highways issuing incorrect and misleading diversion information when convenient due to a closure of the A303 Ilminster Bypass when it deems it necessary despite much correspondence from the PC highlighting this misuse. Highways have assured us that though classified as a 'C' road, the quality of its physical state, and the periodicity of that schedule of work will continue as if it were a 'B' Road. We recently learnt that there had been a bit of a U-turn on the recent Council Gritting Policy, and from April more money will be allocated to gritting the County's roads, let us hope for a continuing warm March and that our road the C5021 will be one of those reinstated. When asked about accident diversion use in icy weather, we are assured that of course it will be *immediately* treated.

Speeding Issues within the Villages

Thanks largely to the efforts of our County Councillor Adam Dance, the proposed Small Improvement Scheme (SIS) reached its final hurdle only to be placed in a funding queue which would mean another delay of months if not years. Various measures were being proposed within this SIS, including along the C5021:-

- alteration of some of the white-lining
- moving some of the 30mph speed limit boundaries and the addition of side Gates
- relocation of bollards in the village
- some surface refurbishments

With this probable delay in mind we approached County 'Signs and Lines' within Highways and we are now hopeful of work starting early this summer aimed at reducing speeding in the villages and enhancing road safety not just generally but also for the newly completed development at Falcon Close.

Last year I reported a lengthy set of measures discussed with local farmer Nick Bragg to attempt to reduce the impact of agricultural vehicle movements within and through our villages. By and large I think that most of the measures discussed and implemented have had a beneficial effect though at peak times of the year some issues still remain. The Parish Council's efforts will continue.

Numerous instances of potholes, road edge erosion, drain problems and flooding in Water Street, Rookesmeade Lane, New

Road and Church Lane have all been reported recently to Highways, and we await rectification/investigation.

The Village Ranger

This brings me on to mention the sterling work done by our village ranger Karen, keeping our Community tidy over the year, and particularly recently the work done in tidying up both sides of Church Lane in St Mary.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Once again Parish Councillors unanimously agreed that they would continue to increase the Precept as there were still concerns that in the future it could be capped by Central Government and that works that had been carried out by both District and County may be passed over to Parishes.

This financial year the Precept applied for was £14,920 but because of the Council Support Grant [£80] paid by South Somerset District Council the actual amount received was £15,000. There will be no Council Support Grant for 2019-2020. As stated previously these monies stay within the Parishes to be spent on village maintenance and local projects. The Precept has been under-spent this year – the first time for a few years - and this is mainly due to the fact that much of the maintenance of the playing field was handed back to the SPFA and the Ranger Scheme did not cost as much as anticipated. Also no monies have been needed to support any grant applications being made by any of our village organisations.

At present the Current Account stands at £584.57 and the Business Reserve at £19,834.50. This is an increase in our Reserves of some £4,000.00. Total monies spent this year to date are £12,119.29. There will be £1,448.04 VAT to be reclaimed.

The main areas of expenditure are - The Ranger Scheme – costs this year of £5,756.80 – this amount being very similar to last year. Costs for the coming year will be increased due to an increase in the hourly rate paid. However, I am sure you will agree that buying into this scheme is worthwhile. For this financial year the Parish Council agreed that they would not continue to pay for the whole of the maintenance of the Playing Fields and have only paid for the gang mowing of the main field carried out by Somerset Landscapes Ltd, which amounted to £1,170. Maintenance of the footpaths has cost some £581.40 [a total expenditure of £1,751.40. This is a reduction to the Parish Council of just over £3,500. The Parish Council is very grateful to Phil Gordon-Smith for all the work he does on maintaining our footpaths.

The grant paid to Seavington Parochial Church Council remained at £1,250 towards Churchyard maintenance. Other grants paid are as follows - £500 [for rent due to SPFA], £300 [for provision of Broadband and WiFi] to the Shop/Cafe and £250 to the Youth Club.

My thanks go to Tony Beresford who has agreed to continue to be the Internal Auditor for the Parish Council.

Pauline Parsons [Responsible Financial Officer].

REPORT FROM VILLAGE TREE WARDENS – This year the Tree Wardens have been helping the SPFA with the planting of tree whips to fill gaps in the hedges in the Playing Fields following works carried out to improve all the trees and hedges on the field. Thanks go to Phil Gordon-Smith and Alan Graham for their continued work on behalf of the Parish Council

REPORT FROM PARISH PATHS LIAISON OFFICER – A consultation by the County Council has recently been carried out with regard to the maintenance of footpaths in the County. Both Mr Gillard and Mr Gordon-Smith attended a Parish Council meeting earlier in the year to help Councillors with this task. Works have recently been carried out on the bridge on the footpath leading across the fields to St Mary's Church as this was very slippery. It is hoped that this will also be done on a bridge on a footpath across Meade Farm. The steps on a footpath on Meade Farm have also been repaired. Two vegetation cuts on the footpath which leads from School Lane south towards Meade Farm will now be carried out by County thanks to one of our farmers agreeing to cut a footpath that crosses his land. Thanks again to Phil Gordon-Smith and Andrew Gillard for this work.

VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS REPORTS

(i) Seavington Playing Fields Association and Millennium Hall – So far in this financial year only one small grant The SPFA would like to start by thanking the Parish Council for its continued support and assistance over the past year and hope that this will continue going forward.

When I took over the Chair of the SPFA in 2017, I made it a stated objective of mine that I wished to see closer collaboration between all village organisations, and in particular with the shop. From feedback I regularly receive, I'm very pleased that this now certainly appears to be happening to the benefit of our local community.

As far as the SPFA is concerned, I'm pleased to report that the Hall is in use most days and as in recent years, continues to operate slightly above its break-even point.

As a committee we took the decision to undertake some major renovations and enhancements to our facilities this year and these include:

Replacement of the gas cooker with a new "safer" model.

Moving the "under 5's play equipment to the main play area to allow for the development of the Hall Garden with improved disabled access from the Hall. This project is due to be completed at the end of April / May this year.

Creation of the new overflow car park behind the Hall with additional landscaping of trees and bulbs being kindly provided by the Gardening Club

The commencement of a major "longer term" project to improve and update the whole play area. Our Project Manager (Karen Day) has been working very closely with SSDC officers to facilitate the redesign of the whole area so that it will continue to provide enjoyment to young people for many years to come. The fence line has already been extended in order to facilitate a

new “zip wire” which is to be funded using the s106 money from Falcon Close.

We also commissioned significant work on the boundary hedges to the field as these were all becoming very over grown and hadn't been managed for many years. We now have a rolling annual programme which should keep everything under control going forward.

In undertaking all of these works, the SPFA has now used up, or committed all of its excess reserves and we are being very active in seeking additional financial support from external sources. We have, besides asking for, and already receiving grants and very kind local community donations, engaged the services of a professional grants management company to assist us. Further grant / donation requests to the wider community and local business organisations are being planned as well.

The SPFA committee has made a conscious decision not to run its own fund-raising events (other than the village lottery and monthly pub quiz) for a number of reasons:

The Hall is currently running above break-even

The financial return on invested time can be very low if events are not well supported

Other village organisations' needs for funds are / have been greater than ours.

Finally, a note for the diary: The next “large” event that the SPFA is to support will be the Caravan and Motorhome Club Concert Band rally to be held in July/ August 2020 which will include a village concert.

Christopher Gough SPFA Chairman

(ii) Community Shop – Firstly thanks to the Parish Council for their generous support.

After a somewhat poor year last year with many issues and expenses that we didn't anticipate, this year has been better. We have paid off the debt to the county and have begun to pay off the bond holders on our original start up list, having paid off about a third so far and plans to pay the rest in the next two financial years.

Sales are good, the café continues to thrive, though we do have issues with volunteer help in the café, though blessed in the store.

We have organised the committee into various sectors, with control over the finances, fund raising and buying. We have a strategy day shortly to start fixing budgets and forecasts for the next five year rolling plan.

We need, as ever, more customers and volunteers, but thanks must go to all who work so hard to make this community shop what it is.

We have some major expenditure shortly as a result of the break-in to the shop, we are having to replace the alarm systems and install CCTV to act as a deterrent to any future issues.

The committee still seeks a chairman!

Mention made of the Taunton Male Voice Choir event in April.

Ian Gibson Chairman

(iii) The Seavingtons' News – The Seavingtons' News has been published every month during the last year with the copy date moved to the 20th of each month at the request of the Parish Council. This later copy date has compressed our production timescales and imposed stricter timings to our production and distribution team; so far this has caused no problems.

This is an opportunity to thank Brian and Elaine Edwards who collate and staple the printed pages to the new timetable; I am most grateful that they are prepared to do this so regularly and reliably. Post production, Brian and Elaine deliver the finished magazines to our street distributors.

The street distributors are the unsung heroes of our magazine who tramp the streets and ensure that every letterbox receives a copy within a day or two of production in good time for the start of the month. Again, without their support our whole enterprise would fail and I would like to acknowledge their rôle and offer my sincere thanks.

Finally, I would like to thank Tony Beresford, our Treasurer and Advertising Manager and Maria Potts who assists in the formatting of articles into our publishing software and frequently sits with me as we assemble the magazine.

The magazine itself has remained at 28 or 32 pages in most months although, as reported before, it has become more difficult to persuade villagers to contribute material.

The magazine continues to more than cover its costs through its income from adverts and the monthly paper skip.

The News has made a short-term interest free loan to the Seavingtons' Community Land Trust to help cover initial costs. We anticipate that this loan will be fully repaid within 18 months

Only one grant has been made this financial year and we would be happy to consider applications for further grants from village organisations

David Froome, Editor

(iv) Youth Group – The final session under the current committee took place earlier this month. The Club will not now run until a new Committee is formed. The Committee would like to thank the Hall and Playing Fields Committee, the Parish Council and the Community Shop who have all supported the youth club.

Parish Councillors would like to thank Janine Lewis and Jane Rice for their commitment to keep the Youth Club open for the last four years, along with Claire O'Neill and Cheryl Herrick who have supported them. Parish Councillors are hopeful that a new committee can be formed in the not too distant future.

(v) SEAVINGTONS' CLT

The construction of all 13 houses in Falcon Close is now complete, and those houses given by Andrew Whitehouse to the Villages were the first to be occupied and were by Christmas last year.

Following completion of the CLT allocated houses, it was necessary to ‘carpet, curtain and floor’ the houses. A generous gift was received from Acorn Developments which got us started and then to cover the anticipated further costs the CLT negotiated two loans from village groups, namely The Seavingtons’ News and The St Michael Church Trust; a huge thank you to both organisations without whose assistance the CLT would have struggled. The terms of those loans preclude any disbursement of funds until they are cleared, but we anticipate being able to start assisting other Village organisation next year.

As there was no other business the meeting closed at 7.40pm

Signed

Date